DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 455 UD 021 517

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TITLE Facilitating Interracial Contact: Let the Structure Do It For You.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 31p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Black Students: Class Organization: Educational Environment: Elementary Secondary Education: Friendship: *Group Dynamics: Middle Schools: *Racial Relations: School Desegregation: *School Organization: *Student Attitudes: Student Behavior: *Student School Relationship: Student Subcultures: White Students
IDENTIFIERS Allport (Gordon W)

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a study that was conducted to determine whether variation in the organizational structure of middle schools would have an impact upon the quality and quantity of interracial contact among students. The study examined the effect of organizational structure upon: (1) number of reported opposite race friends: (2) evaluations of close white and black friends: (3) school interracial climate: (4) the quality of school life: and (5) frequency of observed cross race interactions. Gordon Allport's "contact theory" was tested in both team organized and traditional schools. It was found that the number of opposite race friends is significantly associated with: (1) white students' evaluative ratings of their black friends: (2) students' perceptions of their school's interracial climate: and (3) the belief that the interpersonal relationships within a school are very positive. (Author/APM)

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JUN 1 1981

FACILITATING INTERRACIAL CONTACT: LET THE STRUCTURE DO IT FOR YOU

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, April, 1981

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FACILITATING INTERRACIAL CONTACT

LET THE STRUCTURE DO IT FOR YOU

Does the organization of a school's program and it's curriculum affect the quality and quantity of interracial contact? Ethnographic studies detailing the day-to-day life in desegregated classrooms indicate that it does (Cadmus, 1974; Hillman, 1977; Rist, 1970, 1978 & 1979; Schofield, 1979; Schofield & Sagar, 1977 & 1979; and Scott & Anderson, 1976). Student body differences in achievement levels, interaction styles, and language patterns, compounded by variations in SES levels, have frequently resulted in anxiety, fear, and misunderstandings. Schools have responded to these feelings in a number of ways: students have been ability grouped within classrooms or placed in separate achievement "tracks"; "difficult" students have been separated from classmates; and tight administrative control has been maintained over the movement of students within the school and the amount of free time available for unstructured student interactions. The results have been predictable. Rather than increasing interracial interactions and fostering positive intergroup attitudes, the organizational context of many schools has led to increased stereotyping and intergroup hostilities. But why?

> ...much of the basic social psychological research suggests that we should not expect any positive change in attitudes or behavior from merely putting people together in the same building or room. In fact, we should more likely expect that a poorly planned and executed mixing of racial and ethnic groups would produce negative change (McConahay, p. 106).

As we have begun to recognize the truth of these words, efforts to understand the social dynamics of desegregated schools have called upon a variety of social psychological theories, including Allport's (1954) "contact theory". This theory is appropriate for understanding the social relationships which evolve in desegregated schools because it maintains that certain conditions must be met before contact between two differing groups will result in positive attitudes toward each: both groups must possess equal status, must be cooperatively interdependent, and the contact must enjoy the positive support of those in authority. Two other conditions were added by Cook (1969): the situation should encourage acquaintanceship and the behavior of the group in question should contradict stereotypical beliefs. When a school's curricular policies resegregate students after they enter the building, meaningful cross-race contact is reduced to a minimum along with opportunities for the development of cross-race friendships. Allport predicted that where there was only casual or superficial contact between members of different racial groups, increases in stereotyping and intergroup hostilities would result. And, this is what we are finding occurring in many schools.

While research on the impact of classroom and school organization on intergroup behavior is still in its infancy, we do know that there is a higher frequency of cross-race interactions among students in non-tracked programs (Schofield, 1979; Wellisch, et.al., 1976), in relatively open classroom settings (Cohen, 1975), in team-organized schools (Damico,

Bell-Nathaniel, & Green, 1980), in those classes which use cooperative task structures (Slavin, 1979) and where teachers purposely assign students of different races to work jointly on projects (Slavin & Madden, 1979). Conversely, there is evidence that traditionally organized classrooms with their emphasis upon undifferentiated task structures and public evaluations of performance decrease cross-racial interactions (Damico, et.al., 1980; Serow & Solomon, 1979) and lead to cleavages between those who are academically successful and those who experience difficulty meeting performance criteria (Bossert, 1979; Rist, 1979, 1978; Rosenholtz & Wilson, 1980; St. John & Lewis, 1975; and Schofield, 1979). However, there is still a great deal we do not know about the relationship between classroom structure and the interracial attitudes and behaviors of students. This project was designed to add to this body of knowledge.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether variation in the organizational structure of middle schools would have an impact upon: (1) number of reported opposite race friends; (2) evaluations of close white and black friends; (3) school interracial climate; (4) quality-of-school life; and, (5) frequency of observed cross-race interactions. If contact theory operates as predicted, schools structured to meet the conditions specified by Allport (1954) and Cook (1969) should have black and white students who:

1. have friends of a race different from themselves;
2. perceive no significant differences between their white and black friends;

3. hold similar, positive perceptions of their school's interracial climate;

4. rate the quality-of-life in their school as very high; and,

5. have more observed cross-race student groupings in the school cafeteria than expected by chance.

Method

Sample

Data were collected from all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in five middle schools in a southeastern community during the spring, 1980. Prior to the opening of school in the fall of 1979, the attendance zones for all middle schools in the community were redrawn so that each school contained 70 percent white and 30 percent black students.

Two of the middle schools in the sample incorporated many of the organizational features which experts (Alexander & George, 1981) outline as components of an exemplary school for adolescents. Among these features are: an interdisciplinary, multi-grade team organization; random assignment of students to a team with which they remain for three years; and a strong affective program. In practice, these program components increase the heterogeniety of classroom student populations, reduce the focus on homogeneous grade-level expectations and increase the time students and teachers spend together. Consequently, teachers use more multi-task, individual, and cooperative learning activities and rely less upon recitation-mode and competitive instructional formats. The remaining three schools in

the sample were organized along more traditional lines. Students were segregated by grade; classes in reading, language arts, and math were tracked by ability; and heavy emphasis was placed upon acdemic achievement. Thus, the classrooms in these schools were composed of predominantly same-race students with teacher-lecture and student-recitation being the primary modes of instruction.

Procedures

Data reported here were collected as part of a larger study of interracial climates in desegregated middle schools. All students in the five participating schools (n= 3,512) completed a packet of questionnaires, the contents of which varied somewhat. While one of the instruments was completed by all students, others were given only to a radnom sample of students within a classroom. This procedure permitted a relatively large amount of data to be collected from the same population. Students with similar questionnaire-packets moved to assigned rooms to complete them. The questionnaires were administered by members of the biracial research team with cooperation from the teachers. In each school all questions were read aloud for the benefit of those who might have difficulty reading.

Instruments

Number of Other Race Friends. These data were obtained from a single question. Students were asked to indicate the number of their friends who were of a race different from themselves. The question was in a Likert-format and choices ranged, on a five-point scale, from "almost all of my friends" to "almost none of my friends'.

The Friendship Scale. This scale is a modified semantic differential on which students are asked to rate first a white friend and then a black friend on 10 adjectives. Ratings of the white and black friends are separated by another scale to avoid response set. The original scale had been modified after field testing indicated that middle school students responded best to a Likert-scale format with five choices reflecting the continuum of the various adjectives (i.e., very cooperative, cooperative, neither cooperative nor uncooperative, uncooperative, very uncooperative). The order in which these two scales (one for rating a white friend and one for rating a black friend) were presented was not counterbalanced due to questionnaire-format limitations. However, a previous study of nearly 1,000 middle school students had found that rotating the order of the scales had no effect upon the responses (Bell-Nathaniel, Damico & Green, 1980).

The Allport Interracial Climate Scale. All students completed this Likert-type attitude scale designed to measure students' perceptions of the extent to which their school approximated the conditions Allport (1954) specified as necessary for the development of positive interracial contact (Green, 1980). The instrument consists of five factors: Interdependence, Supportive Norms, Avoidance, Equal Status, and Discrimination.

Quality-of-School Life. Three questions were designed to tap students' evaluations of the quality of life in their school. Questions dealt with whether students perceived their school as good or bad; difficult or easy; and friendly or unfriendly.

Cafeteria Seating Patterns. In addition to the paper-and-pencil measures described above, observations of racial seating patterns in each

school cafeteria were recorded by trained undergraduate psychology students. This procedure requires that all students in a cafeteria be identified by race and sex, with unoccupied seats also being noted.

Results

The ratings of white and black friends on the Friendship Scale, the subscales of the Allport Interracial Climate Scale, and the items composing the Quality-of-School Life scale were all analyzed using 2 x 2 x 5 multivariate analysis of variance procedures (type of school organization x race of student x number of other-race friends). The MANOVA procedure provides a statistical test of the significance of the differences between the dependent variables as sets (Cooley & Lohnes, 1971). When significant multivariate F's were revealed, a series of ANOVA were computed with F levels adjusted for the effects of multiple significance testing within the sample.

On the Friendship Scale there were no significant differences between the way in which black students rated their white or black friends. For white students, however, there were significant Wilks' criterion F's on the ratings of black friends by the Number of Other Race Friends which white students reported having ($F = 3.09$, $p < .0001$) and an interaction between Number of Other Race Friends and School Organization ($F = 1.56$, $p < .01$). Univariate analyses revealed significant differences ($p < .001$) between the manner in which white students rated their black friends, on all 10 adjectives, by Number of Other Race Friends. No significant univariate

F's were revealed for the interaction between Number of Other RAce Friends and School Organization. Table 1 provides the mean ratings given by whites to black friends by the five different levels of friendship. Scheffé post hoc procedures were used to test the differences between the means; subscripts are used to indicate similarity and significant differences among the means.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 reveals that with the exception of undependable/dependable and resentful/helpful, white students who reported "some of my friends" are black were significantly more positive in their ratings of blacks than were those white students who reported "almost none of my friends" are black. In other words, even a slight increase in the number of black friends resulted in significantly more positive attitudes toward blacks by white students.

On the subscales of the Allport Interracial Climate Scale there were significant multivariate F's for School Organization ($F = 30.91$, $p < .0001$), Race ($F = 19.15$, $p < .0001$), and Number of Other Race Friends ($F = 9.28$, $p < .0001$). Univariate F's and subscale means by School Organization and Race are summarized in Table 2 while Table 3 presents the means by each category of friendship.

Insert Tables 2 & 3 about here

Students in the team organized schools reported significantly more positive perceptions of the Interdependence, Supportive Norms, and Equal Status dimensions of their schools than did students in the traditionally organized schools. Students in team schools thus believe that in their schools black and white students work together and get along well, that teachers and administrators encourage positive cross-race behavior, and that status allocations within the school are not made on the basis of race. Black students in all schools are more positive than the whites in their perceptions of the Interdependence and Supportive Norms of their schools while feeling more negative than whites about the Avoidance and Equal Status dimensions of the schools. While black students believe that white and black students get along well and that teachers and administrators favor positive cross-race behavior, they also think that status positions within the schools are allocated on the basis of race and that there are many subtle forms of avoidance of students due to race.

The pattern of means displayed in Table 3 indicates that those students who have "some" friends of a race different from themselves are more positive in their perceptions of the Interdependence, Supportive Norms and Avoidance dimensions of their schools than are those students who report having "almost no" other race friends. While the patterns for the Equal Status and Discrimination subscales are not as clear cut, the pattern is consistent.

Multivariate analysis of the three Quality of School Life questions as a set revealed significant Wilks' criterion F's for Number of Other

Race Friends ($F = 6.44$, $p < .0001$) and an interaction between School Organization and Race ($F = 8.44$, $p < .0001$). Univariate analyses revealed significant effects on the two interpersonal relationship items of the scale by Number of Other Race Friends. At the same time, the Number of Other Race Friends which students reported having had no effect upon whether school was seen as either "difficult" or "easy". For the interaction, an examination of the simple main effects for School Organization / Race of student found that the extent to which black students saw their school as "good" rather than "bad" varied by School Organization ($F = 18.00$, $p < .0001$); blacks in team organized schools saw their school as being significantly better ($\bar{x} = 3.44$) than did blacks in traditional schools ($\bar{x} = 2.90$). No other simple main effects for blacks or whites were significant.

Table 4 presents the F's and means for each of the Quality-of-School Life items by Number of Other Race Friends. Scheffé post hoc procedures were used to test for significant differences among the means; subscripts are used to indicate similarity and differences. A familiar pattern emerges; students who have at least "some" friends of a different race report that their school is better and friendlier than do those students who indicate that the Number of Other Race Friends they have is "almost none".

Given the consistency with which Number of Other Race Friends was significantly associated with students' evaluations of opposite race

friends, school interracial climates, and quality of school life, it seemed germane to determine whether a school's organizational structure would affect the extent of reported cross-race friendships. An analysis of variance was used to examine differences between Number of Other Race Friends for black and white students in team and traditionally organized schools. Table 5 summarizes these findings. White students reported having significantly more black friends in team organized than in traditionally organized schools. The difference in number of white friends reported by black students was not significantly affected by school organization, but the trend favored the team organized schools.

The cafeteria observations provided an opportunity for behavioral validation of the attitude questionnaires. These data were analyzed using a formula developed by Campbell, Kruskal, and Wallace (1966). Somewhat analogous to a z-score, resulting indices reflect the differences between the actual frequency with which blacks and whites sit together and the expected frequency given random distribution of the races within the pattern of occupied seats. Schofield (1979) had found that cafeteria seating patterns were sensitive to variations in school programs which either facilitated or hindered interracial contact. An analysis of variance was performed on the racial aggregation scores to see if there were any differences among the five schools. There was a significant school effect ($F = 3.40$, $p < .02$). Pairwise comparisons of the means indicated that the team school with the most segregation had the same amount

of racial aggregation as the least segregated traditional school. This was taken as support for the previous finding that students in team organized schools had more other race friends than did students in traditionally organized schools. The pattern of means, by school, are recorded in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

Discussion

The major finding of this study is that Number of Other Race Friends is significantly associated with: (1) white students' evaluative ratings of their black friends, (2) students' perceptions of their school's interracial climate, and (3) the belief that the interpersonal relationships within a school are very positive. (Whether a school is seen as "difficult" or "easy" is not affected by Number of Other Race Friends.) Complementing these findings, there is a significant relationship between the type of organizational structure which a school has and the number of different race friends which students report having, especially whites. The Scheffé analyses of the differences among the means by different levels of friendship indicate that having even "some" friends of a different race as opposed to "almost none" is sufficient to affect student perceptions of their school along a number of dimensions.

White students who attend team organized schools are more likely than those who attend traditionally organized schools to have black friends. And, those whites who had even "some" black friends were significantly more positive in their attitudes toward blacks than were those whites who reported having "almost no" black friends. The finding that black students, in general, perceived whites more positively than whites perceived blacks is consistent with previous research (Patchen, Hofmann, & Davidson, 1976; Simpson & Yinger, 1972). It appears as though lower-status minority students view higher status majority students as having qualities to which they aspire while majority students evaluate minority students as behaving in ways which "...are inconsistent with prevailing norms and social etiquette" (Patchen, et.al., p. 353).

Students attending the team organized schools were more positive than those attending traditional schools in their perceptions of the ways in which Interdependence, Supportive Norms, and Equal Status needs were being met. The team schools in this sample were doing something to convey to their students that positive cross-race relationships were valued, that regardless of race they should help each other and get along, and that status allocations were not being based upon race. These messages were being sent and received. Most dramatic of all the school organization findings was the impact that team schools had upon black students' feelings that school was "good" rather than "bad".

The impact that the team organized schools had upon their students was not confined to questionnaire responses. Students put their beliefs

into practice. Recorded seating patterns in school cafeterias revealed that the team school with the most segregated seating during lunch was matched by the traditional school with the least amount of observed segregation. This confirms questionnaire responses that students in the team organized schools had more other race friends than did the students in the traditional schools.

Even though students attending team schools were more positive on most measures than those attending traditional schools, there were a number of findings by race which cut across school organization. Blacks had higher scores on the Interdependence and Supportive Norms subscales of the Allport Interracial Climate Scale while whites had higher scores on Equal Status. Various interpretaions may be offered as explanations of these differences:

1. Blacks see more Interdependence between racial groups in the schools than do whites. This could be a function of the fact that more messages to help and cooperate are being sent directly to them. An alternative explanation would be that since blacks comprise only 30 percent of the student population they are more likely to have been helped by, or to have helped, a white than vice versa.

2. In the area of Supportive Norms black students may be more sensitive to messages from teachers and administrators encouraging positive intergroup interactions. Again, it could be also that teachers are actually sending more of these type messages to the blacks.

3. Black students see more disparity in access to status positions within a school by race than do whites. Status positions may either be

going disproportionately to the whites or it may be that the black students are more sensitive to questions of who is receiving what.

The findings from this study pose an important question for educators. Why should the structure of a school determine the number of other race friends which students report having? The conditions under which friendships were likely to arise were more frequently present in the team organized than in the traditionally organized schools. Before a friendship can evolve, individuals must be physically proximate so that they have an opportunity to interact with each other and discover those things which they share in common. In order for this discovery process to occur, not only do individuals need to be in the same environment, but they must actually interact with each other over time. A single encounter with an individual, especially one who appears different from oneself, is not likely to result in friendly relations much less a real friendship. The structure of a school can provide the opportunities for students of different racial or cultural groups to come together, interact, and develop friendships. Or, the structure can make such interactions unlikely. As we have desegregated schools we have failed to examine the ways in which school structure and curriculum policies affect intergroup relationships and ultimately the achievement of black pupils.

A number of different approaches have been found to be successful in promoting positive intergroup relationships. An analysis of Educational Testing Service data from 10th grade pupils in 48 schools in 10 southern states found that the one variable which had a strong and consistently

positive affect on race relations was for teachers to assign students to cross-race work groups (Slavin & Madden, 1979). A part of the growing interest in various cooperative-type classroom activities, such as Teams-Games-Tournament, Student-Teams-Achievement Division, and Jigsaw, stems directly from their reported success in fostering interracial friendships (Slavin, 1979). Making this approach especially appealing, Brookover, et. al., (1978) report that the high achieving, low SES elementary schools in their sample used more team activities in the instructional program than did the low achieving schools.

These studies, and others, indicate that a team organization is not a necessary prerequisite to the development of interracial friendships; in the schools studied such a structure merely facilitated accomplishing an objective that is possible in other ways. What is required, however, is an acknowledgement that if we seriously wish to decrease racial hostility and stereotyping, we need to examine the opportunities which schools provide for sustained, positive contact between students of differing racial groups.

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Table 1

White Students' Ratings of Black Friends
by Reported Number of Black Friends

Adjective Pair [a]	Univariate F	Means by Number of Friends of a Different Race: Almost all of my Friends	Most of My Friends	About Half of my Friends	Some of My Friends	Almost None of my Friends
cooperative/uncooperative	12.17*	$3.44_{a,b}$	3.77_{a}	3.78_{a}	3.60_{a}	3.11_{b}
energetic/lazy	9.66*	3.19_{b}	3.84_{a}	3.84_{a}	3.65_{a}	3.22_{b}
sloppy/neat	9.50*	3.86_{a}	$3.39_{a,b}$	3.66_{a}	3.59_{a}	3.15_{b}
pleasant/unpleasant	11.31*	$3.71_{a,b}$	3.84_{a}	3.83_{a}	3.76_{a}	3.29_{b}
undependable/dependable	6.04*	2.97	3.12	3.39	3.27	2.92
trustworthy/untrustworty	9.60*	3.86_{a}	3.55_{a}	3.61_{a}	3.55_{a}	3.10
intelligent/slow	10.41*	3.71_{a}	3.46_{a}	3.58_{a}	3.43_{a}	2.96
friendly/hostile	10.37*	4.04_{a}	$3.52_{b,c}$	$3.83_{a,b}$	$3.85_{a,b}$	3.32_{c}
resentful/helpful	7.50*	2.56_{c}	$3.49_{a,b}$	3.61_{a}	$3.43_{a,b}$	$3.15_{b,c}$
clean/dirty	12.75*	4.19_{a}	3.68_{a}	3.86_{a}	3.80_{a}	3.27

[a] All items have been scored so that the higher the mean, the more positive the response.

Note: Differing subscripts within each dependent variable denote significant mean differences by the Scheffe' test at $p < .01$ level.

* $p < .0001$

Table 2

Mean Differences in subscale scores on the Allport Interracial Climate Scale by School Organization and Race of Respondent

Subscale	Univariate F	Means by School Organization		Univariate F	Means by Race of Respondent	
		Team	Traditional		Whites	Blacks
Interdependence	89.92**	3.35	3.13	388.50**	3.06	3.54
Supportive Norms	107.96**	3.80	3.55	60.16**	3.58	3.77
Avoidance	.24	3.42	3.40	11.19*	3.44	3.35
Equal Status	6.52*	3.57	3.50	51.16**	3.59	3.38
Discrimination	.11	2.62	2.61	.54	2.62	2.60

Note: The higher the mean, the more positive the score

* $p < .001$
** $p < .0001$

TABLE 3

Mean Differences in the Subscale Scores of the Allport Interracial Climate Scale by Number of Other Race Friends

Subscale[a/]	Univariate F*	Means by Number of Friends of a Different Race: Almost none	Some	About half	Most	Almost All
Interdependence	67.15	2.77_a	3.29_b	3.56_c	3.53_{bc}	3.55_{bc}
Supportive Norms	17.60	3.44_a	3.68_b	3.84_b	3.88_b	3.95_b
Avoidance	49.07	3.07_a	3.59_b	3.82_c	3.48_b	3.48_{bc}
Equal Status	8.94	3.51_a	3.62_a	3.75_a	3.52_a	3.66_a
Discrimination	5.82	2.45_a	2.63_{ab}	2.74_b	2.51_{ab}	2.84_{ab}

*All p's < .0001

a/ All items have been scored so that the higher the mean, the more positive the response.

Note: Differing subscripts within each dependent variable denotes significant mean differences by the Scheffé test at $p < .01$ level.

TABLE 4

Mean Differences in Quality-of-School Life Questions by Number of Other Race Friends

Questions[a]	Univariate F	Almost none	Some	Almost Half	Most	Almost All
Good/Poor	13.38*	2.78_a	3.19_b	3.40_b	3.39_b	3.39_b
Difficult/Easy	1.89	3.00	3.00	3.08	3.13	3.32
Friendly/Unfriendly	9.66*	3.03_a	3.39_b	3.41_b	3.28_{ab}	3.57_b

*$p < .0001$

a/ Items have been scored so that higher means represent good, difficult, and friendly.

Note: Differing subscripts within each dependent variable denote significant mean differences by the Scheffé test at $p < .01$ level.

Table 5

Differences Between Number of Other Race Friends
by Type of School Organization

School Organization	Category Mean* Number of Other Race Friends	F	p
Black Students		2.76	.0974
Team Organization	3.320		
Traditional Organization	3.525		
White Students		24.37	.0001
Team Organization	3.837		
Traditional Organization	4.150		

* The higher the category mean, the fewer the number of other race friends.

TABLE 6

Cafeteria Racial Aggregation Means by School

	Team School A	Team School B	Traditional School A	Traditional School B	Traditional School C
Means	-4.18_{a}	-6.45_{ab}	-6.41_{ab}	-7.56_{ab}	-8.96_{b}

Note: A score of zero would indicate complete absence of segregation. The more negative the mean, the greater the level of segregation.

Means with different subscripts are significantly different from each other by the Scheffé test at $p < .01$ level.